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AMERICAN HISTORY AND THE IMMIGRANT.

Oliver R. Williamson, 328 Wabash Ave., Chicago.

The problem of the immigrant is a many-sided one. In some way, directly or indirectly, it affects the welfare of every American citizen of the day, and of the generations that are to follow. Likewise, in one phase or another, it is a problem which concerns, however remotely, every organization seeking to conserve the ideals of the American republic.

President Taft, in a speech at the Chicago Auditorium some months ago, said that Aguinaldo, the Filipino chief-tain, when at the height of his revolutionary power, assured his followers that he had the thing called "freedom" safely deposited in a casket on the island of Panay. Just as soon as his army had driven the Americans from the archipelago, he would go and bring it to them! The ideas of a good many immigrants regarding the freedom they shall find in America are scarcely less grotesque. And when one considers the conditions from which they have come, and the difficulties which surround their gaining a true conception of American political ideals, there must be not blame, but sympathy for them.

Some months ago the writer stood at a downtown corner in the heart of the great modern city of Chicago. It was Memorial Day, and a vast throng had assembled to view the parade which is a usual feature of that most beautiful of all civic observances. The surrounding spectators, most of them, revealed by visage and utterance their foreign birth. Great numbers of small children

were a further reminder that the gaping crowd at this corner—representative probably of others that spread along the boulevard for many squares—was not typically American.

The vanguard of the parade brought interest to a tension. A dozen languages spoke admiration of the splendidly mounted squadron of police and the stirring music of the handsomely uniformed band. Then came the long lines of Grand Army men, white-haired and bent, crippled and decrepit, with only here and there a sturdy veteran on whom time seemed not to have laid its withering hand. The crowd at the corner appeared puzzled and disappointed. They had come to see a spectacle, and here was an almost endless string of old men, in plain blue or mixed garb, who had naught of the martial aspect and gaudy caparison that appeal to the sensations.

Then came the regulars, and the bright, alert young men of the National Guard, marching in perfect alignment, erect and vigorous, nattily uniformed, guns polished, banners flying—ah, here was something worth while! The languid crowd pressed eagerly to the curb, future Americans were hoisted to the shoulders of excited fathers, whose admonitions were voiced in strange tongues, and the multitude which had been silent and indifferent as the straggling remnants of the Civil War legions passed, now burst into applause. To these folk, unfamiliar with America's past, the living reminders of a war of long ago meant nothing; it was the *show* that was worth while—the sort of pageantry that in monarchical countries reconciles the oppressed peasant to making himself food for bullets in a cause of which he knows nothing.

It was such an experience as this that emphasized to a native-born American with a long line of American forebears—not his *superiority* to the folk who saw and did not understand, but his *responsibility* for helping them to understand. Many a man of old-world birth is today an

American citizen in the highest and truest sense; many an American whose pedigree goes back to colonial times is less worthy of honor. Heaven forbid that in this country there should be an aristocracy of birth! But there is, to the thoughtful man, a tremendous inspiration in the associations of family history with the sacrifices of the patriot. Bunker Hill is more than a name to the man whose ancestor died there. As he views these straggling survivors of a war of fifty years ago, fought not by a standing army or by conscripts, can his thoughts fail to dwell upon the men of his own blood who struggled for conscience' sake on scores of southern fields; the one who for his country, right or wrong, charged at Buena Vista; the pioneer who helped to hold the day at Fort Meigs, the Scotch-Irish forbear who rose from prayer to risk his life for a free America at Brandywine? Simple, homely folk, all of them, with no pride of noble lineage or manorial dignity; men who chopped their way into the wilderness or wielded a rifle with equal doggedness, as necessity demanded. Certainly a country for which such men were ready to make the grand sacrifice must be worthy the best that we of this day of peace and comfort can give it.

To the immigrant, however, there is given no such inspiration as this. Ignorant in most cases of the history and system of government of even the country from which he has come, he is likely to know nothing of the fundamental principles on which this republic was founded; nothing of its glorious history; nothing of the duties that go with the privileges so freely granted him. Vaguely he believes America to be a land where everyone does as he chooses, where he does not have to enter military service, and where he can make fabulous wages and live as he will. In the old country what small powers of citizenship he possessed were exercised in fear of some petty overlord--were perhaps unquestioningly bartered according to custom. From immigration agents, labor

factors, saloonkeepers, politicians and others who craftily prey on him here he learns nothing that awakens higher ideals. On the contrary, all these forces conspire to maintain his ignorance and narrowness of vision, so that they may the more readily profit by their control of him. Out of the mass, of course, there arise notable exceptions; but among the many millions that have poured into America within the last decade, and who with or without the franchise are determining the future of political and economic America, the aggregate of intelligent, patriotic citizenship is appallingly small.

When we attempt to propose means of improving this situation the temptation is to despair of immediate measures. Two arguments in favor of doing nothing are at once suggested. His ignorance and adherence to racial customs make the immigrant of the present adult generation hopeless; existing machinery of education, environment and freedom from old-world prejudices will enable the newer generation to take care of itself. Is it worth while, then, to seek to inform the immigrant, in his own language, regarding not only the fixed facts of American history, but the ideals which actuated the founders and perpetuators, and which must inspire those who shall be responsible for its future preservation?

We do seek so to inform the pupils of our public schools and the students of our colleges. It is, therefore, probably without question that this thing is worth while to do for every potential citizen—if it can be done. To say that the attempt is likely to fail of wide results is to express a belief that may be reasonably entertained; but such a belief does not remove our responsibility. Ignorance, indifference, lack of intellectual grasp—doubtless these conditions must limit the effectiveness of any effort to inculcate intelligent patriotism among newer residents of foreign birth; but who can tell what a few men of awakened ideals can accomplish with the people of their race?

The machinery for attempting this work is already partly provided. "Settlements," social centers, missions, patriotic societies, religious organizations, are usually not only willing, but anxious, to be the means of disseminating helpful information for the immigrant. Some of them already provide instruction in the obligations of citizenship; and, indeed, in a general way, all these propaganda in behalf of the foreign resident serve to awaken an interest in the ideals of his adopted country and to give him aspirations above those he sees exhibited by the cheap politician and his followers.

But within the particular province of patriotic literature a special reinforcement is needed, which may be in part provided by historical organizations through official action or by the efforts of individual members. Primarily reinforcement would best take the form of a series of concise but ably and attractively prepared leaflets or monographs that may be translated into various languages and distributed at small cost. Other avenues of effort, in which perhaps the historical association could not officially coöperate, suggest themselves. A tentative outline is presented herewith which may be suggestive to those better prepared than the writer to determine feasible lines of action.

1. Historical and patriotic leaflets, translated into various languages and made available for distribution at slight cost by individuals, immigrant aid societies, social settlements, patriotic societies, etc., and in schools for home circulation. These leaflets should be illustrated and should be in general of an attractive character.

2. Lectures and addresses to immigrants, in their native tongues, by men of their own race who have established themselves as American citizens of high character. Moving pictures and stereopticon views are a great aid in gaining and holding interest and illustrating such addresses.

3. Coöperation between the various historical and patriotic societies, immigrant leagues, social settlements, etc., in the establishment of lecture centers; or, perhaps, in such large cities as Chicago, of a central institute for the general purpose of education in the fundamentals of intelligent citizenship.

The suggestion has already been advanced that such an institute—appropriately named for that great friend of the lowly, Abraham Lincoln—might well be placed at the state capital, from which center inspiration and aid might be given to the work undertaken under various auspices among the large groups of foreigners in various sections of the state.

Adult immigrants do not readily learn English beyond the expressions necessary in their employment. This is not generally because of lack of willingness, but generally for want of opportunity to secure capable instructions. English classes at the settlements are popular, and where such original methods as those employed by Dr. Peter Roberts of the Y. M. C. A. are followed, the instruction is eagerly sought. The desire should be, of course, that the new citizen shall learn as quickly as possible to speak the language of his adopted country. But along with the encouragement of this aspiration should go the patriotic instruction that is postponed or neglected for language acquirement at the risk of improper conceptions being formed which cannot later be eradicated.

Something, but thus far comparatively little, is being done in this special line. Before preparing this article the writer addressed a letter to various organizations centered in Chicago and in Illinois, inquiring what was being attempted in the way of patriotic instruction in their native languages for immigrants. The following selections from the responses are representative:

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO SETTLEMENT,
4630 Gross Avenue, Chicago, May 6, 1910.

We have had a school of citizenship for the past three years, organized and in charge of one of our residents. He has lectured on civics and American history and has been assisted by graduate men from the University of Chicago and residents of the settlement.

MARY E. McDOWELL.

(This letter was accompanied with the following extract from The Chicago Tribune:

"To the accompaniment of a brass band playing American patriotic airs eighteen Poles and Lithuanians last night celebrated the taking out of their citizenship papers in this country at the University of Chicago settlement. Miss Mary McDowell, head of the settlement, in an address on 'Citizenship,' impressed upon her hearers the sacredness of their duties as American voters. 'Americans can learn a lesson from you newest citizens,' Miss McDowell told them. 'They take their trusts too lightly. The first thing our new arrivals do is to demand a copy of our constitution in their own language. And they study it and follow it out.'")

HENRY BOOTH HOUSE.

Chicago, April 20th, 1910.

Answering your inquiry whether Henry Booth House does anything toward furnishing patriotic literature to aliens in their native languages I may say that something is being done in that line nearly all the time. Last week 190 Lithuanians were addressed on the census, and some literature was distributed. Last summer instructions in health and citizenship in six languages were circulated, and during the past winter civics has been the uppermost theme in our language classes and club work.

We should be glad to coöperate with you in any project you have in mind that would be possible.

T. W. ALLISON.

CHICAGO COMMONS.

Chicago, April 26, 1910.

Through English classes and gatherings of foreign people we are trying in a small way to furnish them with the literature published by the Department of Commerce and Labor. We are planning another year to increase this line of work and hope to have more definite results to show, in assisting the foreign men in taking out of citizenship papers.

LEA D. TAYLOR.

ILLINOIS SOCIETY D. A. R.

May 5, 1910.

So far as I know our D. A. R. organization in Illinois does not send out literature in foreign languages. Our work has been through historical talks in English Language and picture talks from lantern slides, etc. Each organization, whether by "Patriotic Education Course" or "Children of the Republic" does the work that the locality seems to demand, and does the work as seems best to the committee.

MINERVA R. AMES.

ESTHER FALKENSTEIN SETTLEMENT HOUSE.

Chicago, May 7, 1910.

The settlement so far has not done much in furnishing patriotic literature to foreigners. I certainly would be glad to be able to do something in this line.

MRS. HERMAN FALKENSTEIN.

SOUTH END CENTER.

South Chicago, April 27, 1910.

Our Institution is very young—about two and a half years old; hence we have not done work in many lines where it is generally needed. The only thing that we have done in the way of patriotic addresses is by having some talks on government for the Lithuanians. Besides this we have distributed a good many hundred folders,

giving instructions to foreigners how to become naturalized. Beyond this, I regret to say we have done nothing in the way of furnishing addresses to alien residents in their native tongue.

We have several classes in English.

GRACE DARLING.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN CENTER.

Chicago, April 20, 1910.

Yours of the 15th inst. concerning the distribution of patriotic literature to alien residents is at hand. I am sorry to say that none of the institutions and organizations with which I am directly connected in Chicago are doing anything in that direction to my knowledge. The American Unitarian Association in Boston some time ago tried to awaken interest in that direction, and I believe they have some leaflets in foreign languages in the interest of the Americanization of immigrants, but I do not think that they have done much in that direction. It is altogether a commendable work, and I am glad that you are studying the situation. Will be glad to know more, and would be glad if in some way I could be of some service in the undertaking.

JENKIN LLOYD JONES.

OLIVET INSTITUTE.

Chicago, April 19, 1910.

We distribute patriotic literature, etc. to alien residents in their native languages. Our Home Board furnished some such literature along religious lines. There is a civic association which furnishes literature along the lines of citizenship. They have furnished us some 500 copies of three or four different kinds.

NORMAN B. BARR.

SOUTH DEERING NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER.

Chicago, April 19, 1910.

We have no literature, nor speakers, so far, in this institution for the foreign people. Our work has been

principally with the young people. However, there are a great many of the foreign people in the place, and it would be a great blessing if they might have reading matter, and addresses in their native tongue. I should have procured speakers before, had I been able to do so.

MRS. FRANCIS S. BASS.

HULL HOUSE.

Chicago, April 18, 1910.

We have many classes in beginners' English for foreigners in which we try to teach them something of this country, but this is done in English. The Greeks and other nationalities often hold meetings on patriotic days and are addressed, but I think we have no so-called patriotic literature which we distribute.

L. POND, Secy.

SONS OF VETERANS, U. S. A.

Dwight, Ill., April 16, 1910.

Our organization has done some work along those lines, but not as general as we could wish. We hope to take it up in the near future more thoroughly.

WM. G. DUSTIN.

CHRISTOPHER HOUSE.

Chicago, May 30, 1910.

We have on many occasions given stereopticon lectures of a patriotic nature, renting the slides from Messrs. Moore, Bond & Co. and securing different speakers to give the lectures, usually in English. We also distribute literature in several different languages, like the enclosed copy, ("Information for Immigrants, prepared by the National Society of the Sons of American Revolution, and distributed by the Department of Commerce and Labor"), and in every possible way we emphasize the matter of patriotism and good citizenship.

GERTRUDE E. GRIFFITH, Head Resident.

THE CLARK SETTLEMENT.

Chicago, April 16, 1910.

While we have no department directly engaged in furnishing patriotic literature or address to alien residents in their native language, we shall be glad to do anything possible in coöperating with others interested in such work.

CHARLES W. ESPEY.

GADS HILL CENTER.

Chicago, May, 1910.

We are not doing anything individually along this line of patriotic education.

LEILA MARTIN, Secy.